

Hazards abound in police, fire stations

Orlando Sentinel 8/19/99

□ Winter Park is considering several options to upgrade its facilities and bring them into compliance with the law.

By Sherri M. Owens

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — It may sound crazy, but it's true: The Fire Department has fire hazards, and the Police Department has safety problems, a recent study shows.

The city's old public-safety headquarters do not meet current standards, and now fire and police officials want out.

They are pushing for new buildings, a move that could have taxpayers reaching deeper into their pockets.

"We would have to propose a bond issue," said Fire Chief Dennis Sargent. "We would just want to let people know that we could improve their services and meet other needs as well. Right now, for instance, we don't have many classes for the community because we don't have classrooms. We could just do so much more with the additional space."



SENTINEL FILE

Outdated? The Winter Park Fire Department on Lyman and New York avenues (shown in 1986) has safety violations.

Even more important is the safety factor, according to the report, Preliminary Spatial Needs Assessment.

The Police Department building does not have life-safety systems such as automatic fire sprinklers or an emergency smoke exhaust system, the report says. Gas and pepper sprays are stored in a

part of the building that does not have an independent exhaust system.

Because of space constraints, bio-hazardous materials such as blood-soaked evidence are kept inside the building in violation of current standards.

"These materials have the potential of contaminating the facility and impacting

upon the health of the occupants," the report says.

The Fire Department building has problems, too. Among them are fire hazards. "The station occupies a building that does not provide the type of life-safe-

Please see **STATIONS, I-4**

Public-safety complex is considered

STATIONS from I-1

Orlando Sentinel
ty systems such as automatic fire suppression, emergency smoke exhaust [and] occupancy separations, which in the event of a fire could result in the inability to utilize the facility and cause harm to occupants," the report says.

One remedy calls for a new public-safety complex, combining the police and fire departments, to be built at Canton and Virginia avenues, near the 911 communications center.

The city garage, which is there now, would move to the city's former sewage-treatment plant property off Howell Branch Road.

The Parks Department, across the street from City Hall, could move into the old Fire Depart-

8/19/99
ment building, and the old police headquarters could house the public-works department and utilities administration, which now lease office space at a cost of \$107,200 a year.

A joint-use facility would cost about \$6.9 million, according to the study.

But it is not clear whether a joint-use facility would best serve the needs of the police and fire departments.

"The Canton site isn't big enough," Sargent said. "We wouldn't be able to maneuver the trucks. We could do no training there."

Besides, the Fire Department wants an open facility to welcome visitors for tours, classes and first aid. The Police Department, how-

ever, needs a more secure building.

As an alternative to a combined facility, the Fire Department is considering a block of land on New England Avenue from Virginia to Welborne avenues, an area where city commissioners have said they want to see more residential development. One lot has three houses on it. Another has a single house.

Building two facilities will cost the city \$8.5 million — \$5.8 million for police headquarters and \$2.7 million for the Fire Department.

The proposed budget suggests \$100,000 be set aside for planning and preliminary design of the facilities. The City Commission is expected to discuss the proposals at its work session Monday.